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Message Text

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R 191703Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3653
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMEMBASSY
DIA
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
SHAPEUSNR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USDOCOSOUTH
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 11338

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: 33RD REPUBLICAN PARTY CONGRESS

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE REPUBLICAN PARTY HELD ITS 33RD NATIONAL CONGRESS IN ROME ON JUNE 14-18. THE ESSENTIAL THEME OF THE CONGRESS WAS THE NECESSITY OF MAINTAINING THE PRESENT "EMERGENCY POLICY" OF COOPERATION AMONG THE PARTIES IN
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THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT. PARTY LEADERS HAD BOTH PRAISE AND CRITICISM FOR THE COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST PARTIES BUT DID NOT REPEAT THE PARTY'S PREVIOUS CALLS FOR COMMUNIST ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT. DISSENT AT THE MEETING WAS EXPRESSED ONLY THE PARTY'S INSIG-NIFICANT BUCALOSSI FACTION WHICH CRITICIZED THE PARTY'S QUONDAM POLICY OF FAVORING COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION

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IN GOVERNMENT. IN THE COURSE OF THE COMING WEEK A NEW NATIONAL COUNCIL WILL BE ELECTED AND THIS BODY WILL IN DUE COURSE REELECT LA MALFA AS PARTY PRESIDENT AND BIASINI AS PARTY SECRETARY. END SUMMARY.

1. APPEAL FOR PARTY COOPERATION. THE 33RD NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY WAS HELD IN ROME ON JUNE 14-18. THE CONGRESS, WHICH SHOULD BY THE TERMS OF THE PARTY STATUTE HAVE BEEN HELD A YEAR AGO, HAD BEEN POSTPONED FROM APRIL AS A RESULT OF MORO'S KIDNAPPING. AS PARTY OFFICIALS HAD PREDICTED TO THE EMBASSY, THE CONGRESS WAS A QUIET AFFAIR AND WITHOUT ANY REMARKABLE DEBATES, DECISIONS OR RESULTS. THE PREVAILING THEME OF THE SPEECHES WAS IN EFFECT AN APPEAL TO THE OTHER PARTIES TO MAINTAIN THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT IN THE FACE OF THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT CRISIS. IMPLICIT IN THE SPEECHES WAS A CLEAR CONCERN THAT CENTRIFUGAL FORCES ARE AT WORK WHICH COULD CAUSE THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT TO FALL APART. PARTY LEADERS CAST A NERVOUS EYE AT THE COMMUNISTS AND PARTICULARLY THE SOCIALISTS AND NO ONE REPEATED THE LONG-STANDING REPUBLICAN POLICY FAVORING GREATER COMMUNIST RESPONSIBILITY IN THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE THE PARTY'S TRADITIONAL POSITION ON THE NEED FOR WAGE RESTRAINT AND REDUCED PUBLIC SPENDING WAS REITERATED, ECONOMIC CONFIDENTIAL

CONCERNS WERE OBVIOUSLY SUBORDINATE TO ITS CURRENT POLITICAL ANXIETIES.

2. BIASINI'S REPORT. OPENING THE CONGRESS, PARTY SECRETARY BIASINI REVIEWED THE FAST-MOVING POLITICAL SITUATION IN ITALY DURING RECENT MONTHS AND EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE DANGER TO ITALIAN DEMOCRATIC LIFE POSED BY TERRORISM. "SO FAR OUR DIAGNOSIS HAS PROVED CORRECT; THE PROBLEMS HAVE BECOME WORSE; THE STRATEGY OF BROAD COLLABORATION AMONG THE PARTIES REMAINS INDISPENSABLE AS LONG AS THE GRAVE EMERGENCY CONTINUES; WHAT IS NECESSARY IS A SERIOUS AND UNQUALIFIED SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY," HE SAID. "THE POSITION OF THE REPUBLICANS THEREFORE REMAINS CONSISTENT AND LOGICAL; IT EMPHASIZES THE UNPRECEDENTED GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND REITERATES THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT; HOWEVER, THIS ARRANGEMENT IS NOT SUFFICIENT OF ITSELF TO SOLVE THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS; ONLY A COMMON EFFORT WILL BE EQUALY TO THE CRISIS." ACCORDINGLY, BIASINI CALLED UPON ANDREOTTI TO FOLLOW BERLINGUER'S SUGGESTION FOR A MEETING OF PARTY LEADERS TO GIVE THE

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MAJORITY GOVERNMENT GREATER IMPULSE. TURNING TO THE SOCIALISTS, BIASINI WELCOMED THE PARTY'S RENEWAL BUT CAST DOUBT ON ITS UNITY. HE ADMONISHED CRAXI, IN DEVELOPING A NEW POLITICAL PROGRAM, TO FOLLOW THE "ANGLO-SAXON LABOR PARTY" MODEL RATHER THAN THE "MISTAKEN MITTERRAND EXAMPLE." RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LACK OF LAY PARTY COOPERATION, HE LAID CLEARLY ON THE SOCIALISTS. BIASINI WAS MORE CAUTIOUS TOWARD THE COMMUNISTS; IN ESSENCE HE PRAISED THE PARTY'S REVISION WHILE ADMONISHING IT TO CONTINUE THE PROCESS OF CHANGE. REGARDING FOREIGN POLICY, BIASINI WAS HARSHLY CRITICAL OF THE SOVIET UNION'S ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA AND AFGHANISTAN, LABELING MOSCOW'S FOREIGN POLICY COURSE A REVERSION TO STALINISM.
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3. LA MALFA'S ORATION. LA MALFA HIMSELF DELIVERED A TWO-HOUR SOLILOQUY WHICH HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY INTERPRETED AS A VALEDICTORY TO ACTIVE POLITICS AND AS A SELF-INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT OF ITALY. LA MALFA'S MAIN THEME WAS THE NEED FOR COOPERATION AMONG POLITICAL PARTIES. "MY GREATEST FEAR IS A COLLAPSE OF THE POLITICAL EQUILIBRIUM WHICH IS THE SOLE HOPE FOR THE COUNTRY," HE STATED. REPUBLICANS WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF ITS WEAK PROGRAM BUT RECOGNIZED THAT A DISSOLUTION OF IT WOULD OPEN THE WAY TO DISASTER. LA MALFA WAS ONLY SLIGHTLY LESS CRITICAL OF THE SOCIALISTS THAN BIASINI. IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT HE CONDEMNED THE OLD CENTER-LEFT GOVERNMENT AND MAINTAINED

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THAT ANY REVIVAL OF A CENTER-LEFT FORMULA WOULD
BE "MADNESS." THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT ALSO REFERRED
TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S PROCESS OF REVISION AND
RHETORICALLY ASKED WHAT STATE ITALY WOULD BE IN
TODAY HAD THAT PARTY NOT UNDERGONE SUCH A CHANGE.
JUST PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE CONGRESS, LA
MALFA TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE INTENDED TO PLAY A LESS
ACTIVE ROLE IN DAILY POLITICAL LIFE. "THE TRUTH
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IS THAT I AM DISAPPOINTED, I HAVE LITTLE CONFIDENCE
IN THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT," HE SAID.

4. THE STILL SMALL VOICE OF DISSENT. THE ONLY
DIFFERING VIEWS WERE THOSE OF THE PARTY'S RIGHT WING,
THE BUCALOSSI FACTION. ACCORDING TO THIS GROUP,
IT HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT COLLABORATION
WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAD NOT PRODUCED ANY OF THE
RESULTS CLAIMED FOR IT--IT HAD NEITHER BROUGHT
ABOUT A REVIVAL OF THE ECONOMY NOR HAD IT REDUCED
THE THREAT OF TERRORISM. THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE
WOULD ISOLATE ITALY WITH RESPECT TO THE REST OF WESTERN
EUROPE AND THE PARTY'S POLICY ADVOCATING THIS WAS
RANK ADVENTURISM.

5. UGO FOR ALL; ALL FOR UGO. CONCLUDING THE CONGRESS,
THE PARTY SECRETARY'S REPORT WAS APPROVED BY 93 PERCENT
OF THE DELEGATES, WITH ONLY THE BUCALOSSI FACTION

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DECLINING TO SUPPORT IT. ON ITS FINAL DAY THE CONGRESS ALSO MADE A NUMBER OF CHANGES IN THE PARTY'S STATUTE; THESE WILL INCREASE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FROM 90 TO 110 AND THAT OF THE DIRECTORATE FROM 25 TO 29. A SIX MEMBER SECRETARIAT WILL ALSO BE ESTABLISHED.

6. IN THE COURSE OF THE COMING WEEK THE NEW NATIONAL COUNCIL WILL BE ELECTED. THIS BODY WOULD NORMALLY MEET WITHIN TWO WEEKS TO ELECT A PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF LEONE'S RESIGNATION, THIS ELECTION WILL BE HELD AFTER A NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT IS IN OFFICE. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT LA MALFA AND BIASINI WILL BE REELECTED TO THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS.
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7. COMMENT OF REPUBLICAN OFFICIAL. IN A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH THE EMBASSY TODAY ADOLFO BATTAGLIA SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THE CENTRAL POINT OF THE CONGRESS WAS "THE RECOGNITION THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNING COALITION IS THE SOLE WAY TO DEAL WITH THE EXISTING CRISIS." WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE PARTY'S CONCEPT OF "EMERGENCY POLICY" INCLUDED THE NOTION OF COMMUNIST ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT, BATTAGLIA REPLIED, "WE DELIBERATELY AVOIDED THAT TOPIC"
HE WENT O N TO SUGGEST THAT THE REPUBLICANS NO LONGER ADVOCATED GREATER COMMUNIST RESPONSIBILITY IN THE GOVERNMENT BUT WOULD NOT OPPOSE IT IF IT CAME ABOUT. THE PARTY'S VIEW OF THE COMMUNISTS WAS THAT THEY HAVE UNDERGONE A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE BUT THAT THEY MUST GO ON CHANGING. BATTAGLIA ALSO COMMENTED THAT THERE WAS NO SIGNIFICANCE TO THE AMENDMENTS OF THE PARTY STATUTE. REGARDING THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, HE MADE CLEAR THAT THE REPUBLICANS WOULD NOT SUPPORT A "LAY-FRONT NATIONAL UNITY CANDIDATE." HE ADDED THAT THE REPUBLICAN LEADERS DO NOT BELIEVE THE REPORTS BY THE PRESS AND SOME SOCIALISTS THAT THE COMMUNISTS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT ON ZACCAGNINI AS THE NEXT PRESIDENT.

8. ASSESSMENT. THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE CONGRESS ARE THREE. FIRST, CONCERNED THAT THE COMMUNISTS MAY, AS A RESULT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AND THE VOTE ON THE REFERENDUM, GO INTO THE OPPOSITION AND EVEN MORE APPREHENSIVE THAT THE SOCIALISTS COULD BE UNFAITHFUL TO THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT, REPUBLICAN LEADERS SOUGHT ABE ALL TO USE THE CON-

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GRESS TO APPEAL TO THE OTHER PARTIES TO SUPPORT THE
PRESENT GOVERNMENT WITHOUT CHANGE. SECOND, THE
CONGRESS APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN A STEP BACK FROM THE
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PARTY'S PREVIOUS POSITON OF FAVORING COMMUNIST
ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE THIS GOAL WAS
NOT DISAVOWED, IT WAS DELIVERATELY NOT ENDORSED. THIRD,
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLICAN AND SOCIALIST PARTIES
HAVE DECLINED STILL FURTHER, FROM THEIR ALREADY LOW
STATE. THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING COOPERATION
AMONG ALL THE LAY PARTIES APPEARS MORE REMOTE
THAN EVER.GARDNER

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